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ABSTRACT

A 5-phase plan was initiated in New York's Schuyler County to develop a Community Resources Development (CRD) program which would bring about communication, educate citizens, and build leadership. This was a joint effort involving county citizens and organizations, a county extension agent, a regional CRD specialist, the resources at both the land grant university at Cornell and the New York State Cooperative Extension Service, and aid from other regional insitutions. Phase I involved building a rapport with the citizens, forming a committee composed of people who were not in traditional power positions, providing training, and choosing the county's economy as the program's focus. Phase II involved implementing the program which developed and which was known as Schuyler County Overview: Potentials and Evaluations (SCOPE). Each committee member had a job as well as a speaking role in the education program and secured support for and endorsement of the program. Phase III was concerned with evaluation and Phase IV with recognition and awards. Phase V, follow-through, resulted in five task forces. In summary, the community development process, the interaction of people trying to cooperate through persuasion and reason, did work. It involved the citizens in a cooperative effort, in which the resources of the extension service and the land grant university were shared with the people of Schuyler County. (AN)

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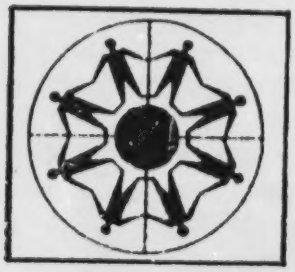

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

COMMUNITY RESOURCES PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AID

HOW TO BUILD AN EFFECTIVE COUNTY CRD PROGRAM ----

JAMES E. HALDEMAN

RC 012298

A paper presented by the author to the September 19, 1979 Tri-state (New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania) Community Resources Development Specialists conference held in Warren, Ohio.

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HOW TO BUILD AN EFFECTIVE COUNTY CRD PROGRAM

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BACKGROUND

"Participation, as a process that provides for the participant a role in decision-making and in the implementation of programs, was seen as an essential element of development, as an end as well as a means, and as an important way of heightening consciousness and knowledge of issues and available choices.

"Citizens must have access to a flow of relevant information and knowledge to be able to participate meaningfully. They must also have the will and willingness to give of their time and energy, and an attitude of mind that sees volunteerism and personal service an essential element of self-help.

"Education plays a vital role at all levels in the development of attitudes favorable to development of participation.

"We must insist upon the importance of training which emphasizes the notions of autonomy, responsibility and sense of community."

What I have just read is a series of quotes taken from the 17th International Conference on Social Welfare.[1] This

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[1]XVIIth International Conference on Social Welfare, Conference Working Party Report, Nairobi, Kenya, 3rd to 7th July, 1974.

conference was held in 1974 in Nairobi, Kenya and involved participants from all developing nations. The author was fortunate to be able to attend this week long conference. It is very interesting to note how these people felt about the role and importance of education and participation. The CRD Committee of Schuyler County feels the same way about the importance of education and participation and as a result have developed a sound CRD program that is having considerable impact. A joint program effort involving citizens and organizations of Schuyler County, a county extension agent, a regional CRD specialist and the resources at the Land Grant University at Cornell, and New York State Cooperative Extension. Remove any one link and the program weakens considerably.

THE SCHUYLER SITUATION

Schuyler County is located in the Finger Lakes Region in Southwestern New York State. It is a very rural county with less than 18,000 people. It is dependent upon tourists and agriculture. In many economic categories the county ranks very low when compared to other counties in the state. It is tops when it comes to natural beauty. In education levels, income levels, and other social related characteristics we are in poorer shape.

Schuyler was the last county formed in New York - over 125 years ago. It was done so by consolidating townships from 3 surrounding counties. (see Appendix) As we have found out--this is where our problems perhaps began. One hundred and twenty-five years later the people of Schuyler continue to

work, enjoy cultural activities, read newspapers, listen to radio and t.v., and shop in the county from which their township originated. For example people living in the Eastern part of Schuyler rely on services and programs offered in Tompkins County. (see Appendix) This has resulted in a continual dollar flow out of Schuyler and has contributed to our tremendous communications problems. Schuyler is served by 4 telephone companies with 13 exchanges and by 10 school districts.

The county government offices are located in the center of Schuyler, with many of the population sitting on the edges. Forty per cent of our labor force commutes out of the county, we have only one radio station, no county-wide newspaper and the net results are very little internal communication. People are not being brought to a population center and the county has relatively few institutions which really bring people together to get them to talk about what we can do as a county to make it a much better county.

STEPS IN DEVELOPING THE SCHUYLER CRD PROGRAM

Following are a series of steps taken in developing the County CRD Program: a program to bring about communication, to educate citizens of the county and to build leadership. This series of steps fit a particular county situation and does not necessarily represent the only approach.

Phase I

AGENT ORIENTATION, CRD COMMITTEE FORMATION, ORIENTATION AND TRAINING

1. It is very important for the Cooperative Extension agent to learn as much about his or her county as possible. Talk to people, drive around the various parts, find out what makes the county tick--or not tick. At the same time build up a rapport and trust with as many people and agencies as possible.

2. Not having a CRD committee in place, the CRD agent spent time looking for prospective members. Formation of the committee is a very important step in developing a program. Following board approval to establish a CRD committee the agent talked with a number of leaders and asked for names of people who would serve well on such a committee. The agent also had some thoughts as to who might serve well on such a committee. Each potential member was visited in their home or place of business and learned of the functions of the committee, the role of the member and of Cooperative Extension. At that time they were asked if they were interested in serving on such a committee. Once the visitations were completed a list of names was presented to the Board of Directors for official appointments to the new CRD Advisory Committee. It should be pointed out that the CRD Committee was not made up of people in positions of traditional power such as a Legislator, Mayor, Farm Bureau President, etc. Chosen were a part-time farmer, retired nurse, an engineer,

farmer's wife, a minister, and even though we did have one town supervisor, he was elected to that post after becoming a CRD Committee member. The fact that people chosen to serve on this committee was for reasons of the agent's does not mean that one should not have people from the power structure on such a committee. Another concern was to tie in with the Extension Association so we asked each program committee to appoint one representative to the committee. It was desired to broaden participation in our activities but we also wanted to influence the association.

3. After the committee had met a few times we invited our regional CRD specialist to provide some training for the group. There is no doubt but what frustrations ran high during these initial orientation and training sessions but we continued to march forward. The training was important and the payoff and rewards were considerable as one can see later.

Following the training program and an orientation by the agent the committee discussed the problems of Schuyler. At the same time we began working on goals and objectives of the committee and a definition of CRD that would represent this group. Working with the CRD specialist and staff at Cornell the group was provided with facts, figures, and trends regarding Schuyler. The group did a community report card exercise. As a result of considerable discussion the committee identified economic development as the most significant aspect of Schuyler

County activities. "It is the pacing element for human services, leadership development, land use, transportation, local government training, etc."[2] At the same time the committee wanted to develop a program that would not only educate the citizens of Schuyler but to contribute towards developing leadership.

After considering several courses of action, the committee decided to develop and implement an educational program dealing with the economy of the county. There was an exchange of letters between the committee, through its chairman and the Director of NYS Cooperative Extension, and committee members participated in several meetings with university staff members and the CRD specialist to determine the types of support available at the university and within the Schuyler region itself.

Support was evident and the education program which could be developed was consistent with, and would be an implementation of the committee's definition of CRD:

> "CRD is getting people together to work on problems which they have defined as needing to be resolved so as to make their community a better place in which to live."

Phase II

DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING A MAJOR EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

One must get the committee involved in actually developing and implementing a major program. It must be their program and one must start from where they are at.

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[2]Taken from a letter prepared by LeRoy Northrop and sent to Director of Cooperative Extension, June 26, 1978.

Examples can be sited of what is meant by using some of the author's overseas experience while working as an agriculturalist and community development specialist in Ethiopia, East Africa during the period 1973-1976. Following a survey of needs it was evident that the number one felt need for the local people was water. In many parts of Ethiopia and other developing nations this need was met by bringing in sophisticated well drilling equipment and experts from other countries. Without involving local people the wells were drilled, fitted with sophisticated pumps and then turned over to the local villagers. Within a few weeks the system broke down or the people just did not use it.

Our group took a different approach. The need for water was identified by local people and we were going to involve these same people in the entire development process. It was felt very important for the villagers to completely understand the process and believe that this was their project. They got fully involved in planning, developing and implementing the well digging project. The author has since left the country and the project continues to move forward. Another related example was that the author was unable to speak the local language so an interpreter was hired as a counterpart who later took over the author's duties. He was able to translate the author's ideas and sift out the right words from the wrong words and pass on the needed information. The author locks upon the Schuyler CRD committee members the same way. They need to be involved and become well informed so that they can speak

purposefully and intelligently about their program. It is the author's feeling that any one of our committee members could be standing here and discussing the CRD development process in Schuyler County.

The program that was finally developed was known as SCOPE: Schuyler County Overview: Potentials and Evaluations. The goal was to develop a better understanding of the economics and dollar flows in Schuyler County, in examining related social and environmental considerations, and in developing alternative courses of action. At the same time the committee looked forward to significant improvement in communications among individuals and groups of the county.

After hours of hard work a program flyer and preregistration materials were developed. Each committee member had a job to do and had a speaking role during the educational program. There is no doubt in the minds of the CRD committee members that this is their program and at the same time realizing the importance of and the support role of the New York State Cooperative Extension CRD Program Leadership Unit; and the resources at the Land Grant University.

The publicity materials were designed and outlined by media services at Cornell. Seven of our speakers were staff from the Land Grant University and NYS Cooperative Extension, and 5 speakers came from institutions within the region. Funds were secured from Cornell University, the State Department of Education and Syracuse University. A

listening team was recruited and training was provided by Cornell and Extension staff. An evaluation team was organized with financial and manpower support coming from the Land Grant University.

The CRD Committee organized the program at the local level. CRD committee members made presentations to the association Board of Directors, Farm Bureau, and the County Legislature and secured support for and endorsement of the program.

CRD committee members sold the program to prospective participants as they met them on the street, in meetings, etc. Our CRD committee chairman wrote a proposal to secure an additional $600 from Cornell for the program.

Phase III

EVALUATION

The next segment of the process is evaluation, evidence of impacts. Nearly 100 community leaders registered at each of the four sessions, but what about the impacts?

As was stated earlier a listening team and evaluation team were on hand to collect, record and summarize the information, especially the citizen input. A considerable amount of information is published showing the citizen input and immediate value and impact of the SCOPE program. It is documented in a report "The SCOPE Report". This contains the proceedings of the educational program along with results of the evaluation and other items of interest to the people

of Schuyler County. This report was distributed to all the SCOPE participants and it is hoped it will serve as a working resource document for subsequent SCOPE task groups.

Let's site some of the early impacts of the CRD education program: (This is since the last session of SCOPE - May 4, 1979.)

1. The County Legislative representative to our Board of Directors begins to attend the CRD Committee meetings. He recently praised the committee for their efforts and contributions to the county. At the same time he is providing valuable input into the meetings.
2. The County Planning Board took official action and recommended closer ties with the CRD Committee.
3. The Chairman of our CRD Committee was asked to serve on a major economic development advisory board being established by the planning board and legislature.
4. A new cooperative effort has developed between our Manpower Office and our local vocational training school. This involves training unemployed people.
5. The Chamber of Commerce requested a return visit of one of our speakers to learn the steps involved in setting up an agency to assist small businesses in the county.
6. For the first time the visual environment has surfaced publicly and there are a number of examples where people are starting to fix up, clean up and paint up their properties.
7. New faces have come to the extension office from agencies outside the county and newly formed agencies from within wanting to cooperate with Extension as we deal with

the problem areas in the county.

8. Extension's Long Range Planning Committee recommended to incorporate the SCOPE findings into their long range planning document.

9. The Extension Board of Directors has requested a citizen of the county give a presentation on how the SCOPE program has impacted his/her life and the community at this Fall's annual meeting.

10. Gary Lee, Congressman from New York's 33rd District, stated:

> This needs to be done in more communities. I hope that it serves as a model for other communities to look at, to learn from and to grow from, because most certainly the most important ingredient of accomplishment or success in a community starts with the people in that community, however you may define that community or that region.[3]

11. The chairman of the CRD Committee was recently appointed to an advisory committee for the Office for the Aging.

12. The "SCOPE Report" has been used by several groups in the county as they discuss community problems and possible solutions.

13. Material presented at SCOPE is being used in local high school Economics classes.

Other examples can be listed but the goals of bringing people together to identify their problems, and at the same time improve communications between individuals and

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[3]Excerpt from presentation given by Congressman Gary Lee at Session 4 of SCOPE, May 4, 1979.

agencies across the county, is being reached. In addition, the process goal of developing leadership to fill positions in the community is being accomplished.

Phase IV

RECOGNITION

Recognition of the citizens or CRD committee members is a very important step in building an effective CRD program.

One of the things carried out for the CRD Committee was to initiate bringing together CRD committee members and agents from several counties to participate in an evening of relaxation and learning. Each county represented gave a brief report on their CRD activities, problems, frustrations, and a little history on the formation of their committee. It should be mentioned that the group did have dinner together first and spent a considerable amount of time exchanging ideas. Following the county reports two resource people from Cornell gave timely talks to the group. We feel everyone found this to be a rewarding experience. A few weeks later awards were presented to members of the Schuyler CRD Committee for their outstanding contributions to the county. These awards were signed by the assistant director for Rural and Community Development at the Land Grant University and the CRD specialist.

Phase V

FOLLOW THROUGH AND ON-GOING EVALUATION

To assure follow through and continue to expand upon and accomplish committee program goals we gave participants at our SCOPE program an opportunity to get involved in one or more of the five concern areas which surfaced at the meetings. More than 60 people signed up and agreed to work on a task force of their choice. At the same time the audience voted and agreed upon two items; first, a SCOPE program should be held annually and secondly, the CRD Committee should facilitate the initial task force meetings. The CRD Committee is now putting together a working bus tour of the county.

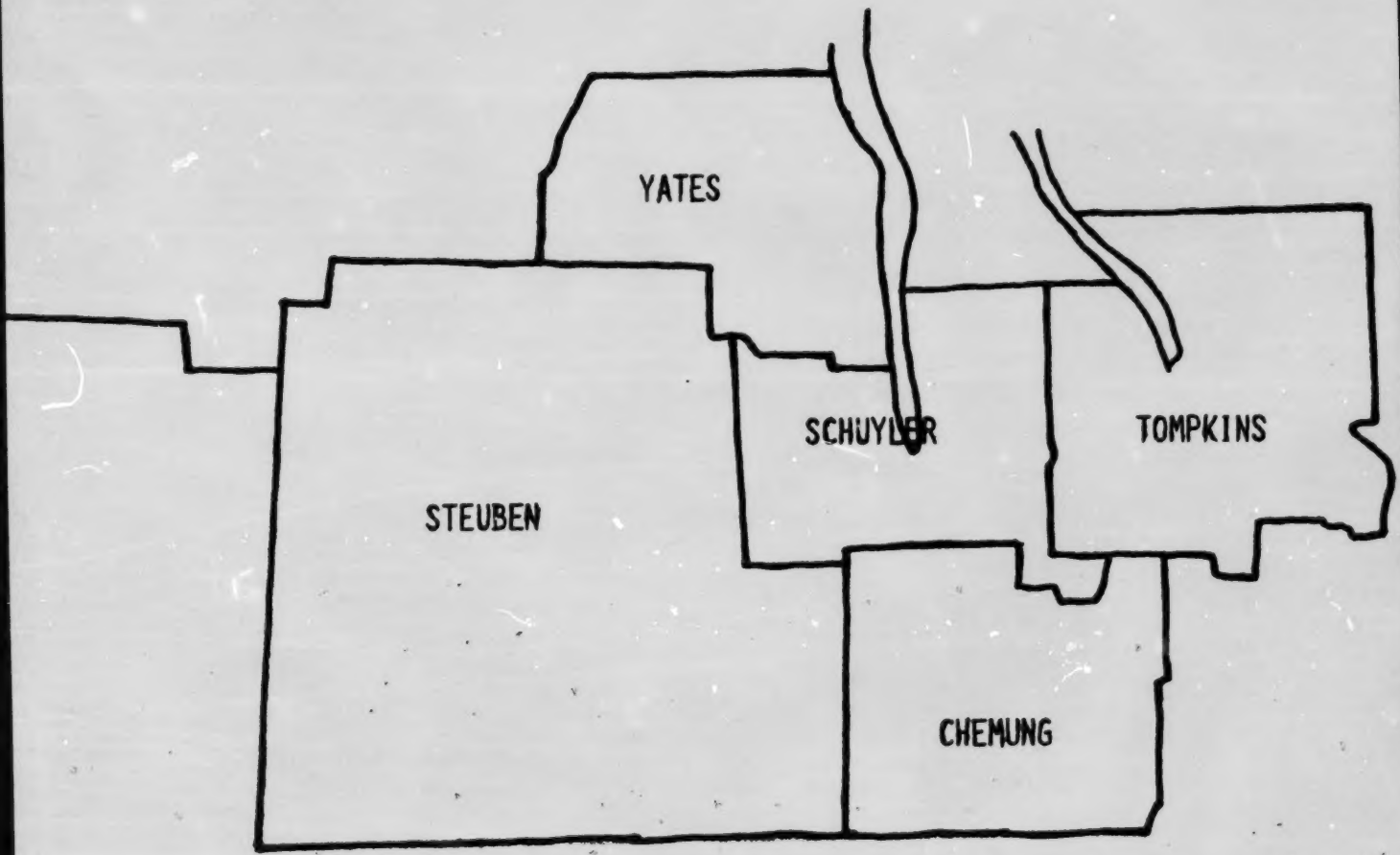
SUMMARY

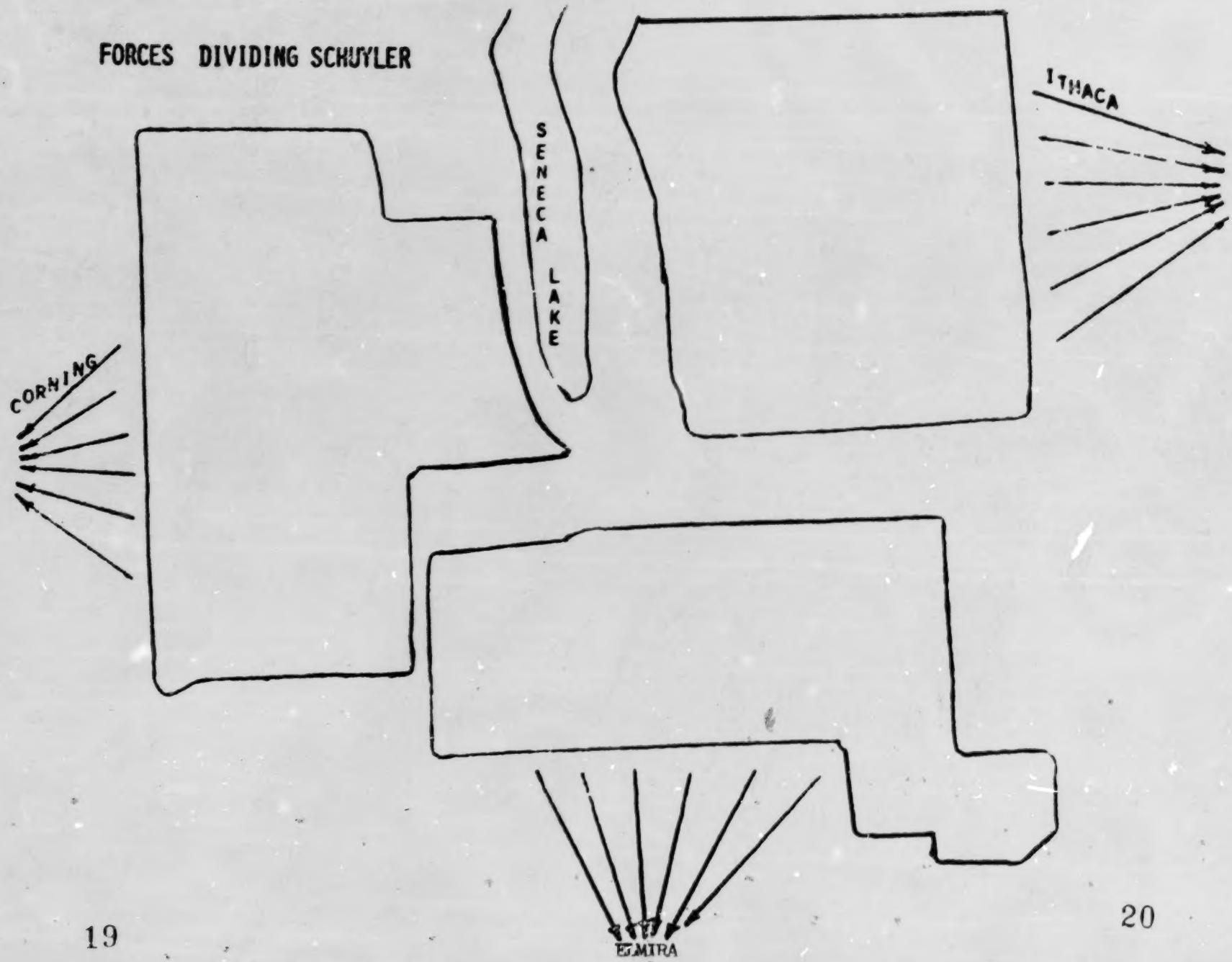
So often we come into a community and hear, "You won't be able to move in this county". "People don't want to participate or get involved." "You can't fight the existing system or power structure." The author felt that way when he came to Schuyler County. Then the author decided to step back and take a new look at the situation--to gain perspective. When one thinks about it, something may not be wrong with the system; it may be wrong with you or me for not being able to get around it or work through it. For the first time since he had been working in Schuyler County the author believed that one can have an impact by either changing the system, working within it, or moving around it. In all of this it seems significant to mention that our CRD Committee chairman

was asked to run for our county legislature.

In summary the author believes that the community development process, the interaction of people, trying to cooperate through persuasion and reason, sometimes patience and fortitude, really can work. And a lot of the time one can slowly but surely move toward some of the objectives that you want to attempt to achieve. But it does indeed mean involving the people in a cooperative effort--in our case sharing the resources of Extension and the Land Grant University with the people of Schuyler County.

THE SCHUYLER ECONOMIC REGION

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